

Daily Reflections



MESSAGES OF ADVENT

By Sr. Jayne Helmlinger, CSJ

Today's Gospel

In the sixth month, the angel Gabriel was sent from God to a town of Galilee called Nazareth, to a virgin betrothed to a man named Joseph, of the house of David, and the virgin's name was Mary. And coming to her, he said, "Hail, full of grace! The Lord is with you." But she was greatly troubled at what was said and pondered what sort of greeting this might be. Then the angel said to her, "Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God. Behold, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you shall name him Jesus. He will be great and will be called Son of the Most High, and the Lord God will give him the throne of David his father, and he will rule over the house of Jacob forever, and of his Kingdom there will be no end."

But Mary said to the angel, "How can this be, since I have no relations with a man?" And the angel said to her in reply, "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you. Therefore, the child to be born will be called holy, the Son of God. And behold, Elizabeth, your relative, has also conceived a son in her old age, and this is the sixth month

for her who was called barren; for nothing will be impossible for God.”

Mary said, “Behold, I am the handmaid of the Lord. May it be done to me according to your word.” Then the angel departed from her.

LUKE 1:26-38

Reflection

Whenever I read this beautiful passage from Scripture describing how the angel Gabriel greeted her, I experience the humanness of Mary. She’s a teenager and she’s just been given this incredible message that she, a virgin, will bear a son and he will be called Jesus, the Son of the Most High.

Luke describes Mary as being confused by Gabriel’s greeting, “hail, full of grace.” I marvel at her ability to process this stunning announcement so quickly and to respond, “Behold, I am the handmaid of the Lord. May it be done to me according to your word.”

There are many ways to break open this beautiful passage. One is to simply quiet yourself and allow your imagination to picture this scene unfolding in your mind's eye. What captures your attention? What feelings bubble up as you reflect on Mary’s response? Gabriel’s words? This is a wonderful way to take in the incredible gift God is giving us through the birth of Jesus. If you feel so inclined, pause now and let the Holy Spirit guide you in a quiet reflection on this passage from Luke.

Another way to break open this scripture is to think about how God has come unexpectedly into your life. Perhaps you’ve been visited by an angel (unfortunately I have not!). Another avenue of God’s presence in our lives is through others. How has God revealed God’s self to you through others?

As for myself, I’ve come to look at and listen to others as if they are messengers from God, especially if I’m struggling with something and experience a disquietude within. The person I might need to hear might just be that deep inner voice that comes from spending quiet time with the Beloved. At other times, it is seeking a spiritual director or companion to talk with and probe how God might be beckoning me at this moment in my life.

Perhaps you’ve been God’s conduit for another person at a time in their lives where they needed to experience God’s love and presence. For example, there have been times when someone’s name keeps coming to mind and I can’t get past the nagging feeling that I need to reach out to this person. I’ve ceased

trying to figure out if I should call, email, or text this person – I simply do it. More times than not, the person has responded with such gratitude because they needed someone's listening presence at that moment in their lives. Open yourself to this possibility today because you might be the one person that another person needs to hear from.

At the root of all these musings is the simple question: how open are you and I to hearing and responding to God's call or invitation in our lives? During these weeks of Advent, how have you and I been preparing our hearts and minds to listen and respond to God's call in our lives? It doesn't have to be a monumental decision or call; it can be something quite simple.

For instance, perhaps you've experienced yourself hurried or aggravated because of the Christmas parties and the preparation for Christmas you're tending to at work or at home. You might ask yourself how you can carve out a bit of space to appreciate the beauty and quietude of Advent before Christmas arrives.

Messages of Advent

O God, I hear your whispers amidst the busyness of life as Christmas approaches. Quiet my inner being so I might experience the gratitude and love I hold in my heart for your son, Jesus.

O God, may I be open to being your conduit of love and presence for those in my life. May my gifts to those I love move beyond the material and into the sacred gift and meaning of Advent where love overflows.

O God, may I set my life free by focusing on what really matters – relationships, hope, joy, and peace. Let my inner self be a place where Advent finds a home and propels me to create space for those most in need of a reassuring presence.



Museo San Marco (Italy)

Photo by Sr. Jayne Helmlinger, CSJ

For Pondering

Reflect on one of the options provided in my reflection:

- Quiet yourself and allow your imagination to flourish as you mediate on Luke's Gospel passage.
- Ask yourself: How has God unexpectedly come into your life when you least expected it? What did you learn from this experience?
- Ask yourself: How might you be God's conduit of Advent joy, anticipation, and hope this day?

For Prayer

*O God, we pray for the grace to slow down
and allow Advent to find a home within us.
Let us not get too caught up in the rush of "Christmas"*

*and bypass this time of anticipating and praying in gratitude
for the gift of your Son, our Savior, Jesus.
Amen.*

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